

Frequently Asked Questions II: Children's Vision Law (Missouri)

Are 1st grade students required to have an exam this year (2008-09)?

Only 1st grade students newly enrolled to school are required to have an eye exam unless a parent or guardian requests in writing that their child be excused from the requirement. If the student attended kindergarten in any state last year they are not required to have an exam in first grade this year.

What about a student retained in kindergarten?

All students attending kindergarten in the 2008-09 school years are required to have the comprehensive eye exam unless a parent or guardian requests in writing that their child be excused from the requirement.

Do I exclude a student if they do not have an exam or written request to be excused by January 1, 2009?

No student should be excluded or penalized for not receiving an exam or returning a form requesting to be excused from the requirement (exam). The law does not require or encourage exclusion or penalty for this.

Where can I find a copy of the comprehensive eye exam form?

The form can be found on the Missouri Optometric Association website (www.moeyecares.org); the Missouri Association of School Nurses website (www.missourischoolnurses.org) and the Department of Health and Senior Services School Health Web page (www.dhss.mo.gov).

Has the commission developed an "opt out" form?

There is no official "opt out" form. A parent or guardian sends a statement to the school requesting the student be excused from the eye exam. Schools may develop a form. If your district contracts with the Missouri School Boards' Association (MSBA) for policies, ask to review policies JEC and JHC for a sample letter of objection.

Who is responsible to send a copy of the eye exam form to the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS)?

It is the responsibility of the eye physician, not the school nurse, to submit a copy to DHSS.

What information does the school district/school nurse collect and report?

School districts will be asked for statistical information later in the school year. For example: the number of children in kindergarten; the number of children with a comprehensive eye exam; of those examined, the number with positive findings; the number of children with positive findings receiving glasses; the number of children receiving an exam not meeting the criteria of a comprehensive eye exam; and the number of children opting out. We anticipate the report will be web-based and sent to the Department of Health and Senior Services. The reporting form and format is under development.

What should I do if the eye care provider returns an incomplete examination form?

You are not responsible. Please retain a copy of the examination in the student's record, as well as any data (with no identifying information) for reporting purposes.

What if a pediatrician, family practice physician, or nurse practitioner signs the examination form?

Review the form to determine if the exam meets the criteria noted in the statute for a comprehensive eye exam. We encourage you to talk with the parent and let the parent know the exam does not meet the criteria of a comprehensive eye exam required by the law. It is not necessary to require the parent to take the child for another exam.

Why did the Commission include the word physician in the parent letter?

The Missouri Statute 167.194 refers to a “comprehensive vision examination performed by a state licensed optometrist or physician”. The letter is consistent with the law. The term physician is intended to refer to a physician capable of performing a comprehensive eye examination as outlined in the statute. Your district has the option to change the wording of the parent letter.

Has the Commission developed a screening form for 1st and 3rd grade vision screenings?

A screening form is under development. For the 2008-2009 school year, we suggest school districts continue with current vision screening procedures. We strongly encourage “distance and near screening” along with a screening for stereopsis. Districts will be asked to report screening results. The process for the reporting has not been determined, but it is anticipated the reporting will include the number of children in each grade (1st and 3rd), the number of children referred for an eye exam, the number of referral completions, and the number of children requiring treatment. The method of reporting is under development. More information will be provided as soon as the process has been finalized.

The Lion’s Club provides vision screening with a vision photoscreener. Does this qualify for the required vision exam?

The photoscreener is only a vision screening device and does not qualify as the comprehensive exam.

What can we expect for next year (2009-10?)

School districts will be required to provide vision screening for each student once before the end of the 1st grade and once before the end of 3rd grade. This screening will include distance vision, near vision, and Random Dot E testing. We anticipate the Commission will suggest a selection of simple vision screening procedures.

My district is considering purchasing vision screening equipment now. What type of equipment should we purchase?

We would encourage districts to refrain from purchases until the commission has determined the standard vision screening procedures for the 2009-2010 school year. The commission will not require screening to be done by expensive equipment such as vision screeners (Titmus, Optec, Suresight, etc).